

GRACE

by
jane therese

Representation by Dapper Bird Entertainment
Contact: Olga Aldama,
MBA dbe@dapperbird.com
(818)967-4041
www.dapperbird.com

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

We *push through* to the back of a girl's head donning headphones, humming. Low chatter pops up throughout the room every now and again from someone forgetting the rules. Then a preemptive - *SSSHHH!*

Her hand on the mouse *clicks*. A quirky, yet confident GRACE (16) stares at the screen, *Julliard Admissions*. Maneuvering through the website, Grace finds herself on the *Pre-College* site. Selects, *Voice (classical)*.

*Scrolling down...*looking at the different stills of the students performing.

Grace opens up her e-mail browser to see one incoming. She stares for awhile, then *clicks* it open. All she sees is, *Congratulations...*

GRACE

Yes!

VOICE

Sssshhh!

She *clicks, Print....*

EXT. SUBWAY STATION - LATER

The infectious range of a Countertenor floats off the brittle tiles of the station.

GRACE

Sempiternam -

Pinging off the steel tracks. Punks, SPIKE and RAMONE (18) scout out the scene. Clearly Ramone is in charge of Spike. A domineering figure over his lithe compadre.

A small crowd lingers off to the side in awe of Grace. Passersby gawk, gabbing over her range, give generously. Ramone drools over their generosity.

Spike lingers on Grace for a bit. Ramone nudges him. They slip through the crowd.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Requiem.

Grace finishes. The crowd hoots and hollers. Generously tossing their loose change and bills in her tip bucket.

The train arrives. Doors breathe open. Grace gathers her things. Without a moments notice, Spike sweeps in snatching her bucket.

Ramone pushes Grace through the exhaling doors. Trapped. Grace watches in horror, pounding on the window as the train chugs forward. Spike and Ramone shrink in size.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - EARLY AFTERNOON

Grace stares blankly at her clothes *spinning around and around* in the dryer. Getting a second wind, she scoops them out.

EXT. GAS STATION - SAME DAY

Carrying a small trash bag stuffed with clothes, Grace walks to the back of a gas station bathroom.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Unhooking her *just for show* bra, flat chested Grace studies herself before the rusted mirror. Playing with her hair, different *do's*. She gathers her flesh simulating breasts. She checks her face.

Humming to herself, she undresses. *Quick, purposeful shots. Never quite letting us see her full body. Glimpses.*

Washing her feet first in the stained sink of the grungy gas station. Towel drying them off. Carefully stepping on a paper towel so not to get them dirty, again.

Washing her hair in the sink. Soaking up the excess water from her hair with paper towels. She washes her face, underarms, crotch.

Afterwards stepping into her uniform dress. She fastens her dove pendant necklace around her neck.

She studies herself in the mirror. A subtle innocence. She stuffs her bra with toilet paper. Applies a quick brush of mascara, lipstick. Smoothing her wet hair back with a rubber band.

Snap!

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Grace stoically stands facing the diner across the street.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

She pays close attention to LILY (60s) hastily making her way around the dinning area. Pouring coffee.

LILY
You're late. Feel free to jump in
anytime.

Grace just stands there. Lily dumps her dishes in a tray bucket. Wiping her hands on her apron, she sees Grace watching her.

LILY (CONT'D)
Well, what?

Grace smiles.

GRACE
I got an appointment.

Lily grabs Grace.

LILY
You got in?

A smile so big all she can say is -

GRACE
Yup.

The girls scream with excitement. The COOK (50s) yells over the line.

COOK
Where's the fire?

Lily pulls Grace off to the side, whispering -

LILY
I'm so proud of you.

Giving Grace a bear hug.

LATER

Clearing tables, Grace sees a half eaten sandwich *being pushed aside by a set of perfectly painted manicured nails.*

GRACE
You done ma'am?

Lingering over the plate.

KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Turning her back to the line, Grace woofs down the sandwich and fries. Lily enters unloading her dirty dishes.

LILY
So, when's the date?

Chewing down her food. Swallowing the evidence.

GRACE
Two weeks.

Lily strokes Grace's hair. Brushing at her chin.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm nervous.

Lily takes Grace's hands.

LILY
Say it.

Looking Lily in the eyes.

GRACE
Grace is a sanctification through
divine assistance.

LILY
Yes.

Grace takes a breath and returns back to work.

DINER - EARLY EVENING

Shift's over. Lily counts out tip money. Handing Grace her share and a bag of food in takeout containers.

Grace counts and pockets the money.

LILY
Sure you don't want a ride?

Grace smiles. Mockingly -

LILY/GRACE
It helps me clear my head.

Laughing at their own words.

LILY
 Okay, okay, I worry about you,
 that's all.

Grace gathers her things moving towards the door. Smiling -

GRACE
 Don't.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Lily pulls out of the parking lot. With a quick step Grace makes her way down the street carrying her bag of food.

The glow from a fire burns off in the distance. Humming to herself, *Pie Jesus*. Hitting a breathtaking range.

GRACE
Pie Jesu -

Clears her throat, then starts again.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Pie Jesu -

A car passes Grace bopping down the street. She stops. Half humming and singing. She turns her back to the street.

INT. CAR - SAME

Ramone sitting shotgun. Spike at the wheel looks from his rear view mirror. He does a double take not sure of what he just saw - or *thought* he saw.

GRACE (OS)
Dona eis requiem.

Ramone nudges Spike to keep his eyes on the road.

EXT. TENT CITY - LATER

Grace makes her way through the makeshift area of tents and blankets, shopping carts. Home to a handful of homeless adults.

A few gather around a burning drum keeping warm. Others meander shooting the shit.

An EX-JUNKIE (30) keeping a down on her luck MRS. JOHNSON (60) company, calls out to Grace -

JUNKIE

Hey G, how was your day?

Grace digs in her bag tossing the Junkie a biscuit.

GRACE

Awesome! Hey Mrs. Johnson, you make
'em share with you, okay?

Grace arrives at a clearing with two tents side-by-side. A fire from the pit crackles. An old man's scrawny leg pokes out. Grace gives it a friendly jab.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Hey, you dead yet?

She opens the flaps peeking inside.

EXT./INT. GRANDFATHER'S TENT - SAME

GRANDFATHER (70) wrapped in a blanket, wheezing. Grace opens her bag, taking out all the fixings for a feast.

GRANDFATHER

Smart ass. Just like
your..er...Cindy.

Grace doesn't skip a beat. She helps her struggling Grandfather sit up. Kissing his forehead. He becomes more alert with every bite.

GRACE

Slow it down. You're gonna choke
and I'm not fishing your food out
of your throat.

Shoveling more inside.

GRANDFATHER

Then you get everything I own.

Grace looks around at her sad reality.

GRACE

Did you read those 5 pages like I
asked you?

Dr. Seuss 'Put Me in the Zoo' rests nearby in the dirt.
Grandfather grunts.

LATER

Tucked in his sleeping bag, Grandfather reads aloud by flashlight; *Dr. Seuss 'Put Me in the Zoo'*.

GRANDFATHER

*'Yes. th-th-is this is wh -wh where
I want to be. The cir-cus is the pl-
place for me.'*

Grace laying near the campfire looking at the night sky.

GRACE

Do you think God will let me into
heaven?

GRANDFATHER

Girl, why do you say such things?

GRACE

I dunno, just 'cause....'cause I'm
damaged.

Grandfather leans over -

GRANDFATHER

God would be a fool not too.

GRACE

What, about Cindy and Jeff?

GRANDFATHER

You're not a shoe to try on honey.
Maybe they have to go a couple more
rounds before they get it right.

Reaching over to Grace, reassuring.

GRACE

Did you always love me, no matter
what?

GRANDFATHER

You're the perfect fit.

INT. GRACE'S TENT - REHEARSAL DAY

Grace *wraps* an ace bandage between her legs. Stuffs her bra.

EXT. TENT CITY - CONTINUOUS

Grace uses the cracked window of a broken down Chevrolet carcass to ready herself for work. Grandfather kisses her forehead.

INT. DINER - DAY

Diner sparsely filled. Lily and Grace behind the line casually chatting while doing side work.

Lily makes coffee. Grace peels fissured shells from hard boiled eggs.

LILY

I can handle it, see - nothing.
It's slow. Go get ready -

GRACE

You sure?

Grace keeps peeling.

LILY

Sure I'm sure, ahh, but wait -

Lily goes behind the counter taking out a clothing bag handing it to Grace.

LILY (CONT'D)

Something special.

Grace takes out an outfit from *Free People*. Speechless. Beaming inside.

LILY (CONT'D)

Go on, see if it fits.

The diner door opens. Spike and Ramone cackling loudly help themselves to a booth.

Grace starts for their table. Lily reaches over stopping her.

LILY (CONT'D)

I got em' suga'. Go get ready.

Grace heads towards the bathrooms.

SPIKE AND RAMONE

Spike motions to Ramone he's using the bathroom.

HALLWAY

Spike steps aside for a MAN in the hall. Leaning against another bathroom door. It cracks open.

Spike peers in the bathroom.

HIS GLANCE FLASHES -

- To a half naked Grace.
- Bra on the floor in a pile of tissues.
- Grace *standing* over the toilet.

SPIKE'S POV

His look is both of confusion and shock. Grace slams the door shut. Spike stands there for a moment.

BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Grace breathing hard. Face flushed.

DINING ROOM - SOME TIME LATER

Lunch over. Spike watches Grace emerge from the hallway wearing her new clothes. She looks beautiful.

RAMONE

Hey, isn't that the subway singer?

Spike watches Lily hug Grace. Grace lowers her eyes avoiding Spike all together. He watches Grace make her way down the street towards the subway.

EXT. DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Ramone lights up. Spike dashes back into the diner. After a moment, reemerges. Spike hangs a bit with Ramone then cuts him loose.

RAMONE

Hey, where you going?

Spike runs across the street.

SPIKE

I have some business I gotta take care of.

GRACE (OS)
Pie Jesu, pie Jesu -

INT. SUBWAY - LATER

Grace watches the flash of neighborhoods past by.

GRACE (VO)
Pie Jesu, pie Jesu -

In a few cars down, Spike catches glimpses of the same fleeting neighborhood.

GRACE (OS) (CONT'D)
Pie Jesu, pie Jesu -

The subway tunnel throws the cars into instant night. Grace's eyes closed. Absorbed.

GRACE (VO) (CONT'D)
Qui tollis peccata mundi

Spike watching the lighted stations pop past.

GRACE (OS) (CONT'D)
Dona eis requiem -

The car stops. Doors open. The station floods with passengers. Grace makes her way up the stairs. Spike follows.

GRACE (VO) (CONT'D)
Dona eis requiem -

EXT. LINCOLN CENTER PLAZA - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

The plaza crowded with others seeking the same dream. Grace takes a breath and enters the audition building.

GRACE (VO)
Pie Jesu, pie Jesu -

Spike runs across the plaza in pursuit.

GRACE (OS) (CONT'D)
Pie Jesu, pie Jesu -

INT. LINCOLN CENTER AUDITION BUILDING - SAME

Spike loses Grace among the crowd. Instruments, vocal and mechanical, fill the hallways. Faculty guide applicants to their audition sites.

Spike opens wrong doors. A maze of corridors and people. It's all too confusing. And then he hears -

GRACE (OS)
Qui tollis peccata mundi

Spike stops and listens.

GRACE (OS) (CONT'D)
Dona eis requiem -

Spike flashes back to when he first saw Grace.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - FLASHBACK

The infectious range of a Countertenor floating off the brittle tiles of the station. A small crowd lingers off to the side.

GRACE
Agnus Dei, Agnus Dei

Ramone scouts out the scene. Egging a reluctant Spike to follow his lead. There's something about Grace pulling at Spike.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Agnus Dei, Agnus Dei

The train arrives. Doors breathe. Ramone shoves Grace through exhaling doors. Her eyes meet Spike's. Sympathetic.

GRACE (VO) (CONT'D)
Qui tollis peccata mundi

Grace helplessly watches them disappear from the platform.

GRACE (VO) (CONT'D)
Dona eis requiem, dona eis requiem

Spike stands motionless staring. Ramone shoves him to get moving.

INT. LINCOLN CENTER HALLWAYS - PRESENT DAY

Spike hurriedly makes his way through the halls into the...

AUDITORIUM

...dimly lit auditorium. Grace standing center stage performing before a panel of JUDGES.

GRACE
Sempiternam,

Spike standing in the middle of the aisle lost for words. Eyes moist.

GRACE (VO) (CONT'D)
Sempiternam, Requiem.

He looks down at his perfectly manicured hand. *The same hand we saw in the diner over the half eaten sandwich.*

Then looks up at Grace.

FADE TO BLACK